

## Sūrah Aḥqāf

### Central Theme and relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This is the last Makkan *sūrah* of this group. After it come three Madīnan *sūrahs* which mention the fulfillment of the promises and the materialization of threats mentioned in the previous Makkan *sūrahs*. The Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah* is the same as that of the previous one and its opening verses are exactly the same as well. In this *sūrah*, the opponents of the Qur'ān are informed in very blatant words that the Day of Judgement which the Qur'ān is warning them of is certain to come. If on the basis of their beliefs about polytheism and intercession they are trying to ignore its warnings and regarding the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) to be an imposter, then they should remember that there is nothing in reason and revelation to support such superstitions. On the contrary, this Qur'ān is something whose news has been given beforehand by a great witness belonging to the Israelites and something whose predictions are mentioned in the Torah. Thus they should not be deceived by the encouragement and support they receive from the Jews and the Christians, for these people are denying their own messengers and scriptures.

After this, the Prophet (sws) is assured in very clear words that he should not care about his opponents. His responsibility is of only communicating this Book to others; only those people will profess faith in it who are straightforward and sincere and who are cognizant of their fate; he should not pin any hopes in these people who are indifferent and have no fear of any accountability; what he is presenting is so powerful and potent that when a group of jinn who while passing by had a chance to listen to it, it became its ardent admirers; if it is having no influence on these people, then there is no defect in it; it is, in fact, their hearts who are afflicted; he should continue patiently with his work and consign them to their fate which they will encounter very soon.

### Analysis of the Discourse

**Verses (1-14):** The Qur'ān is a scripture revealed by God, the mighty and wise but those have denied the Hereafter are evading it. This world is not meant for the entertainment of a merry-maker; however, the Almighty has created it with a great purpose and meaning. Hence it is essential that one day it end and its fate manifest itself. These people trust their deities

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and intercessors; they reckon that if ever the Day of Judgement comes, they will save them whereas neither reason nor revelation corroborate the existence of the deities they impute with God. These people have pinned their hopes in them and the deities themselves are unaware that they are being worshipped and being called for help. On the Day of Judgement, these deities instead helping them would become their enemies. These people while being overawed by the reasoning of the Qur'ān regard it to be magic and regard the Prophet (sws) to be an imposter. Such obdurate people are not worthy of being attended to. The Prophet (sws) is directed to tell these people that he is not the first messenger of this world; many messengers have preceded him; he has the same traits and characteristics as the previous messengers; he should inform these people that if by being lured away by the Jews and Christians these people are opposing him, then they should fully contemplate the evil fate they are going to meet; a great witness of the Israelites has already borne witness to him and he is also the person who is the one whose predictions are recorded in the Torah; if poor people are professing faith in him, then they should not make this as an excuse to not embrace faith and thereby deprive themselves of God's mercy

**Verses (15-20):** The type of people who will profess faith in the Qur'ān and the type who will reject it are referred to.

Those people will profess faith in it who acknowledge the rights whose awareness is found in their nature, who feel indebted to their parents and are obedient to them; they may have committed sins in their youth while being overwhelmed with emotions; however, they never adopted a sinful life; they would generally repent after committing a sin. When they reached the ripe age of forty, they turned towards God with full sincerity and expressed: "Lord! Take care of us so that we are able to show gratitude to your favours to us and to our parents; bless us with the urge to do righteous deeds and make our children pious also; we turned towards you and are obedient to you." God will forgive the sins of such upright people and will include them among the dwellers of Paradise.

Those people will reject it who, on the contrary, led a careless and indifferent life; they neither recognized the rights of their parents nor that of God. If their parents warned them of the Hereafter and the accountability which will take place there, they scolded them by saying that this is mere bluff and that they will never profess faith in these nonsensical things; if there is life after death why do not the vast majority of dead come back to life.

God will reward or punish both these types of people in accordance with their deeds; the pious will be richly rewarded for their virtues and

the evil will be punished for their vices. God will not be unjust to any.

When the arrogant, who were not professing faith in the Qur'ān by making the excuse that the poor have professed faith in it, are thrown into Hell, they will be told that they have taken their share of good things in the previous world; here nothing except ignominy awaits them.

**Verses (21-28):** The example of the people of 'Ād is cited to warn the Quraysh who were also warned of God's grasp the way they were; however, the 'Ād showing conceit in their power and might did not pay heed; at last the Almighty destroyed them even though they were much more powerful and mighty and much more developed in their civilization and culture than the Quraysh; all their intelligence and acumen could be of no avail to them against God.

**Verses (29-32):** In order to assure the Prophet (sws), an impression of the jinn about the Qur'ān is cited: if the worthless among the Quraysh are not duly honouring the Qur'ān, then this does not mean that there is some fault in the Qur'ān or in the Prophet (sws); this is in fact because of the hard hearts they possess. Such is the potent influence of the Qur'ān that when a few of its verses were overheard by a passing by group of jinn, they became so fascinated by it that they became its ardent preachers among their nation.

**Verses (33-35):** This is the concluding section of the *sūrah*. The disbelievers are warned and threatened and the Prophet is urged to show patience and perseverance.

### Section I: Verses (1-14)

#### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١) تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢) مَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَمَّا أُنذِرُوا مُّعْرِضُونَ (٣) قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ ائْتُونِي بِكِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَارَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤) وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّن يَدْعُو مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَهُمْ عَن دُعَائِهِمْ غَافِلُونَ (٥) وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَكَانُوا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ (٦) وَإِذَا تَتَلَّى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ (٧) أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ كَفَىٰ بِهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٨) قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَا مَنْ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ (٩) قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ فَأَمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٠) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَذَا إِفْكٌ قَدِيمٌ (١١) وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّنَذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٢) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (١٣) أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٤)

This is Hā mīm. This Book has been diligently revealed by God the Mighty One, the Wise One. (1-2)

We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them except with a purpose and for an appointed time. And those who have disbelieved pay no heed to what they have been informed of. (3)

Tell them: “Have you ever pondered on those whom you worship besides God? Show me what part of the earth have they created or who among them has a share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture revealed before this or some other vestige of knowledge, if what you say be true.” And who is in greater error than those who invoke idols other than God which will never be able to respond to them till the Day of Judgement and they are also unaware of their invocations! And when people are called together, they will declare themselves their enemies and will disown their worship. (4-6)

And when Our very clear revelations are recited to them, these disbelievers say about the truth after it has come to them: “This is plain magic.” Do these people say that he has invented it himself? Tell them: “If I have invented it, then there is nothing you can do to save me from God and He well knows about your frivolous talk. Sufficient is He as a witness between you and me. He is the Forgiving One, the Ever Merciful. (7-8)

Tell them: “I am not the first messenger nor do I know what will be done with me or you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am only an open warner.” (9)

Ask them: “What will happen then if this Qur’an is indeed from God and you reject it; a witness from the Israelites has also testified to a book similar to it. So he professed faith in it, while you showed arrogance.” Indeed, God does not guide the wrongdoers. (10)

The disbelievers said about the believers: “Had there been any good in the Qur’ān, these people would not have professed faith in it before us.” And since they did not receive guidance from it, they will now say: “This is an old falsehood.” (11)

And before it the Book of Moses is present: a guide and a blessing. And this Book is in confirmation of its predictions. It is in the Arabic tongue, to forewarn those who have wronged their souls and is glad tidings for the righteous. (12)

Indeed, people who affirmed: “Our Lord is God,” and then persevered on it shall have nothing to fear or to be sad about. It is they who are the dwellers of Paradise; they will abide in it forever. This will be a reward for their labours. (13-14)

### Explanation

حم (١) تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢)<sup>١</sup>

Both these verses also form the opening part of the previous *sūrah*, and have been explained there as well. The fact that this *sūrah* also begins with the same name and the same opening verses shows that both *sūrahs* have something in common. Thus the coming verses will reveal this commonality and a summary will also come forth of all the previous ḥamim *sūrahs*.

مَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَمَّا  
أُنذِرُوا مُّعْرِضُونَ (٣)<sup>٢</sup>

This is an expression of sorrow on people who are adamant on denying the noble scripture revealed by God, the Mighty and the Wise. They were also insistent on evading that to inform them of which God had revealed this scripture.

The words عَمَّا أُنذِرُوا refer to the Day of Judgement. Such is the nature of this reality that if it is not accepted, then the whole universe would seem a

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2. We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them except with a purpose and for an appointed time. And those who have disbelieved pay no heed to what they have been informed of.

meaningless and purposeless place of entertainment. The fact of the matter, on the other hand, is that the Almighty has created this universe with a purpose and objective. God not only is Powerful; He is also wise. If the Hereafter is not accepted as a reality, then after viewing this world its Creator can indeed be regarded as powerful; however, it will have to be conceded that He has done a purposeless thing even though this is against His apparent attributes. Just as this world reflects His power, it also reflects His wisdom. Both these attributes exist in Him simultaneously. Here, readers may keep in mind the linguistic principle which has been alluded to at numerous places in this Book: when attributes are mentioned without a particle of conjunction the way they are here (الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ), then they exist simultaneously in the being they qualify.

The words *إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى* imply that just as it is evident that this universe has a purpose (*بِالْحَقِّ*), an obvious consequence of its purposefulness is that it should exist till a certain time period and not go on forever and that one day a court of justice be set up at the end; those who did pious deeds should then be rewarded and those who did evil deeds should then be punished.

Here it is possible that the question arise that reward and punishment are something very logical, but why is it necessary that the whole world end after a certain time period; is it not possible that this world continue to exist and those who die are continued to be rewarded or punished? This question generally arises in the presence of numerous misconceptions in the mind discussing which may not be appropriate here; however, I will allude to one thing here: every deed of a person whether it is a pious one or an evil one has the ability in it to be contagious. A person can sow the seeds of piety such that for centuries mankind is able to benefit from it; similarly, a person invents a wrong and misleading philosophy which engulfs numerous minds and then with the passage of time it becomes so firmly established that nation after nation expend their abilities and potentials to strengthen it and it becomes virtually impossible to get rid of it. In the light of this background, if it is needed that a person be given true information of his good and evil deeds, then it is essential that the remotest of effect such philosophies be brought forth and any of the elements of nature which bear witness to that person's good and evil deeds be presented in support. Without this, perfect justice cannot take place. Thus it was deemed essential that this world end after a certain time and God decide the fate of people in a court in which all mankind is present. So much so, even if the testimony of the heavens and the earth is also required, all their records be furnished. This, of course, can only be possible when the

day of judgement is common to all.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ إِيْتُونِي بِكِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَارَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ<sup>3</sup> (٤)

This verse brings forth the real reason of their evasion: since they rely on their alleged deities and intercessors, they do not pay heed to the warnings of the Qur'ān. In their opinion, in the very first place the Day of Judgement is a mere threat which is a bluff and if there is some truth to it, these deities which they worship will save them from every danger. The verse says that the Prophet (sws) should ask these people if they have ever reflected on the what they worship besides God – whether they have any reality or not or whether they are mere products of their fancy; if they think that they have some reality, then they should show him (ie the Prophet (sws)) if they have created the earth or any part of its objects or if they have any role in the creation of the heavens and the earth. In other words, they can only deserve to be called partners of God if they have any role in the creation of the heavens and the earth. If they do not have any such role, then what is the meaning of regarding them to be partners of God Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. How can He tolerate them to be the masters of the world He has created! And on what reason did they regard it to be right to ascribe partners to His sovereignty and His rights without His permission. It should be kept in consideration here that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the Creator of everything. Thus this argument is based on something which they too acknowledged.

Consider next the last part of the verse: إِيْتُونِي بِكِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَارَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. The term أَثَارَةٍ refers to a tradition which is transmitted from someone's forefathers: It stated in *Aqrab al-mawārid*:

و لأثارة البقية من العلم تؤثر (وهم على أثاره من العلم) اي بقية منه ياثرونها من الأولين

And لأثارة refers to that part of knowledge which is transmitted as a tradition; the expression وهم على أثاره من العلم means that part of knowledge which they obtain from their earlier generations.<sup>4</sup>

3. Tell them: "Have you ever pondered on those whom you worship besides God? Show me what part of the earth have they created or who among them has a share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture revealed before this or some other vestige of knowledge, if what you say be true."

4. Al-Khūrī, *Aqrab al-mawārid*, vol. 1, 41.

The words which qualify it are meant to show that this tradition should be based on knowledge and not on fancy or conjecture.

The verse says that if these people claim that God has partnered their deities in governing His kingdom, then to prove the veracity of this claim they should either present a book before this Qur'ān or some tradition that is based on knowledge and not on fancy or conjecture. In other words, what is implied is that whether God has a partner or not is an issue which can only be resolved through God's testimony: only He can tell if He has partnered anyone and if He has, then only can identify them? The only way to know the testimony of God is the Books revealed by Him or the traditions and vestiges which have been faithfully transmitted to later generations. If there is something like these, then it should be brought forth and merely on the basis of conjecture and speculation people should not ruin their fate by building castles of fancy in the air.

Here, it needs to be kept in mind that the revealed knowledge of God has either been transmitted through His scriptures like the Torah and the Gospel or through traditions. Thus the teachings of Abraham (sws) and other prophets have reached later generation through traditions. There is not the slightest evidence of any polytheism in the knowledge that has been transmitted through these means. Though the Torah, the Gospel and other scriptures have been inflicted with large-scale interpolations yet they contain no trace of polytheism. Similarly, the traditions about Abraham (sws) cited in the Torah, the Gospel and other scriptures do not contain the parasite of polytheism. The Idolaters of Arabia claimed to be adherents to the ways of their forefathers. However, in spite of repeated challenges from the Qur'ān, they were unable to prove if their ways had a religious or rational basis. Till the very end, they kept on saying that they were following the ways of their forefathers regardless of wherever their forefathers acquired these ways from.

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّن يَدْعُو مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَن لَّا يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَهُمْ عَن دُعَائِهِمْ غَافِلُونَ (٥) وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَكَانُوا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ (٦)<sup>5</sup>

This is an expression of sorrow on the situation of these naïve people: who can be more unfortunate or farther in error than those who invoke

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5. And who is in greater error than those who invoke idols other than God which will never be able to respond to them till the Day of Judgement and they are also unaware of their invocations! And when people are called together, they will declare themselves their enemies and will disown their worship.



and beseech others than God who will never be able to respond to them till the Day of Judgement. On other hand, the ones who are invoked are not even aware of these invocations. In the Hereafter, these alleged deities will in fact turn up to be their enemies and will curse them what to speak of helping them.

The beings which the Idolaters worshipped were either fictitious so that the question of being informed of invocations of the worshippers does not even arise. As for those beings who have some reality like the angels and the jinn whom the Idolaters of Arabia worshipped or Jesus (sws) whom the Chrisitans worshipped, they could not be aware of any invocations to them let alone accept them. It is mentioned in Sūrah Mā'idah that God will ask Jesus (sws) on the Day of Judgement if he had taught people to worship him and his mother. He will reply that how could he have said such a thing which he had no right to say it and that he had told them what God had asked him to and what they did after his death was not known to him and that only God knew it.

In Sūrah Furqān, the rejoinder of the angels is mentioned in the following words:

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَقُولُ أَأَنْتُمْ أَضَلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَؤُلَاءِ أَمْ هُمْ  
ضَلُّوا السَّبِيلَ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْبَغِي لَنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُونِكَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ  
وَلَكِنْ مَتَّعْتَهُمْ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا بُورًا (٢٥: ١٧-١٨)

And remember the day when God gathers them and all which they worship besides him. So, He will then ask them: "Was it you who misled these My servants or did they choose to go astray?" They will answer: "Glory be to You! It was not befitting for us to choose other guardians besides You. But what happened is that You gave them and their fathers Your favours so that they forgot Your reminder and were doomed." (25: 17-19)

It is evident from this that as far as the prophets and the righteous are concerned, they will hold those people responsible who made them partners of God and worshipped them in absolute violation of the teachings of these prophets and the righteous. As for others like the jinn and the devils who were also worshipped, the details of the way they will acquit themselves from their followers and the way these followers will curse them can be seen in various *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān. It is evident from these details that they will be the greatest enemies of their worshippers what to speak of bringing benefit to them. Readers are

advised to look up my explanation of verses sixty two to sixty four of Sūrah Qaṣaṣ.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ<sup>٦</sup>

This verse refers to the various excuses which these Idolaters would invent to run away from the call of the Qur'ān. It says that when the very clear verses of the Qur'ān relating to monotheism and the Hereafter are recited before them, and they do not have any answer to them, they regard the Qur'ān to be pure magic. It has been explained at various places in this *tafsīr* as to why these people would thus call the Qur'ān. When the leaders of the Quraysh were left with no option but to accept and acknowledge the potent influence of the Qur'ān, they tried to convince their masses that though this Qur'ān is very powerful and moving, yet this in no way is a reason to regard it to be divine; on the contrary, it is purely a magic of words.

The words لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ after لِلْحَقِّ are meant to express condemnation: they regarded this truth to be magic when it came to them; it is not improbable that a person be deceived of the truth as long as it does not make itself plain before him; however, once it becomes evident only those people make such excuses who want to live in deception and want to lead others to deception as well.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ كَفَىٰ بِهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ<sup>٧</sup>

This is a reference to another propaganda worked up against the Qur'ān by its opponents. Since this was an absolutely baseless propaganda and its baseless nature was fully evident to its perpetrators, it is expressed here in a style that reflects amazement and wonder: instead of responding to it, the matter has been entrusted to God. They are told that if in their frenzy to deny the Prophet (sww), they, against the calls of their own conscience, have gone as far as to regard him to be someone who has concocted the Qur'ān himself and then ascribed it to God, then any discussion with them is purposeless. Only God will decide this

6. And when Our very clear revelations are recited to them, these disbelievers say about the truth after it has come to them: "This is plain magic."

7. Do these people say that he has invented it himself? Tell them: "If I have invented it, then there is nothing you can do to save me from God and He well knows about your frivolous talk. Sufficient is He as a witness between you and me. He is the Forgiving One, the Ever Merciful."

matter.

The words قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا imply that if these people think that the Prophet (sws) has authored the Qur'ān and then wrongly attributed it to God, he should not engage in any discussion with them; he should just tell them that if he had forged such a big lie on God nothing could have saved him from the clutches of God, and at that time, these people will not be able to help him that they may consider the burden of this crime on themselves.

Consider the next part of the verse: هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ The expression أَفَاضَ فِي الْحَدِيثِ has been explained earlier in this *tafsīr*. Its primary meaning is to criticize something to the extent of making a mountain of a mole-hill. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that God is fully aware of the hair-splitting they are indulging in and so he has consigned this matter to Him; God will decide whether he is a fabricator as a result of which they are not giving him any importance or regarding him as a fabricator, in spite of considering him to be righteous and honest, merely because his message is against their whims and desires.

The words كَفَىٰ بِهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ imply that in this dispute God suffices as a witness between the Prophet (sws) and them. It needs to be kept in consideration here that when it becomes evident that the contesting group is bent upon obduracy, animosity and fraud and is intentionally saying something which is against its conscience, then, in this situation, the only option left for a reasonable person is to end the debate by consigning the matter to God. This civilized way at times induces adamant addressees to review their attitude. Even if they are not influenced by this way, this indeed is the blessed way viz a viz preaching. Unbiased people are definitely influenced by it and the status of a preacher also increases manifolds in the eyes of his opponents because of this display of self-confidence.

The words وَهُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ imply that the Prophet (sws) has consigned this matter to God in the hope that He will definitely give His verdict in it and it will become evident to all whether the Prophet (sws) is a fabricator or if these people are intentionally denying the truth; if there is any delay in this verdict, even then there is no reason for him to be worried or lose hope; for he knows that his Lord is Gracious and Ever Merciful; He is not hasty in punishing people and in fact gives them full respite so that those among them who want to repent and mend their ways are afforded the opportunity and can thereby earn His mercy.

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنَّا أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ  
وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ <sup>8</sup>(٩)

The Prophet (sws) is asked to communicate to his people that if they are opposing him because he is a human being like them and is unable to show the punishment he is threatening them with, then they should remember that he is not the first human being who has been sent as a messenger; many messengers have preceded him and all of them were human beings; none of them was a super human; it has remained the practice of God that to human beings, human beings are sent as messengers. The Prophet (sws) is also asked to communicate to them that if he is not able to bring the punishment as per their demand, then this also does not negate his claim to messengerhood. He should tell them that this is because he has claimed to be a messenger and not God who knows the unknown; he should further inform them that he fully acknowledges that he does not know how He will be dealt with by God nor does he know how they will be dealt with by Him and that he is only following the revelations sent down to him and also informing them of these revelations and that he is an open warner to them as per the directives of God and that he has no responsibility beyond this nor claims to be someone beyond this. The implication is that if they want to debate with him, then it should relate to his real claim and by raising irrelevant questions, they should neither put themselves nor others through bother

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ فَأَمَّا  
وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ <sup>9</sup>(١٠)

The answer to the conditional statement is suppressed here. This suppression is pointing towards the fact that this answer encompasses such horrible consequences as are unable to be expressed in words. The Prophet (sws) is asked to communicate to these people that they are very obdurately denying this Book and are regarding it to be concocted by the

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8. Tell them: “I am not the first messenger nor do I know what will be done with me or you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am only an open warner.”

9. Ask them: “What will happen then if this Qur’an is indeed from God and you reject it; a witness from the Israelites has also testified to a book similar to it. So he professed faith in it, while you showed arrogance.” Indeed, God does not guide the wrongdoers.

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Prophet (sws) who has falsely ascribed it to God; however, if it in fact turns out to be from God, then what will they do. He is further asked to tell them that they must also think that a witness from the Israelites has borne testimony to such a thing, and himself professed faith in it while they are evading it out of sheer arrogance.

Here a question arises as to who this witness is. Our exegetes have given three answers to it:

The general opinion is that this refers to ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām (rta);<sup>10</sup> however, a group of scholars has objected to this opinion on the grounds that he embraced Islam in Madīnah many years after the revelation of this *sūrah*; so how can a reference to his testimony be cited in this Makkan *sūrah* even before he embraced faith when there is not even the slightest indication of at least this verse being regarded as a Madīnan one.

The second group thinks that this is a reference to Moses (sws);<sup>11</sup> however, this view too is not tenable. In the succeeding verses, he is mentioned by name together with the Torah separately with reference to bearing witness in favour of the Qur’ān. So what is the need of mentioning him here without specifying him?

A third group has regarded it to be a generic noun and interprets it to mean the witness borne by the common masses of the Israelites who professed faith in the Qur’ān. This group includes Ibn Kathīr;<sup>12</sup> however, this view is absolutely baseless. To regard it to be a generic noun will be absolutely against linguistic principles; however, I do not want to engage myself in this unnecessary discussion. The style of the discourse itself bears witness that here the undefined noun is for magnitude (*tafkhīm shā’n*) and not for derision (*tahqīr*) or generality (*ta’mīm*). Thus it is necessary that the reference be to a personality whose personality as well as whose bearing witness is of such import that it can be presented as testimony.

In my opinion, this reference is to Jesus (sws). Following are its reasons:

1. The first reason for this is that the Jesus (sws) has said that the special purpose of his advent is to clean the way for a comer. After him, Muḥammad (sws) was sent as the last prophet and the last messenger. For this reason, this “comer” can only refer to him and no one else whatsoever. A study of the Gospels reveals that just as before the advent of Jesus (sws), the prophet Yaḥyā (sws) was sent to give glad tidings of his arrival, similarly, before the arrival of Muḥammad (sws), the last

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10. Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayan*, vol. 26, 10.

11. Ibid., vol. 26, 9.

12. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 4, 157.

prophet, Jesus (sws) was sent to clean the way for a comer. The real topic of the Gospels which is discussed in them in various styles is the glad tidings of Muḥammad (sws). My mentor, Imām ḥamid al-Dīn Farāhī, has written a special treatise on this topic in the English Language showing that the real purpose of the Gospels is to introduce and describe the prophet Muḥammad (sws). The “kingdom of heaven” mentioned very frequently by Jesus (sws) and described in the form of parables all relate to prophet Muḥammad (sws) and to the Qur’ānic call.

2. The second important thing is that though the predictions about Muḥammad (sws) are also present in the Torah and the Psalms and I have cited references about them in previous *sūrahs* but Jesus (sws) has made predictions about him by actually naming him. In Sūrah ṣaff, this is referred to thus:

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ (٦:٦١)

And remember when Jesus son of Mary said: “O Israelites! I have come to you as a Messenger from God in realization of the predictions which exist before me in the Torah, and to give glad tidings of a Messenger who will come after me whose name is Ahmad. So when he came to them with clear signs, they said: “This is plain magic.” (61:6)

The glad tidings referred to by the Qur’ān in this *sūrah* are present in the Gospels. In some of the Gospels, the Prophet (sws) is repeatedly mentioned by his very majestic name like the Gospel of Barnabas. The Christians do not regard it to be an authentic Gospel but this does not make any difference; other Gospels too contain a reference of the Prophet (sws). In them, though he is not mentioned by his name, yet his mention by his traits and characteristics is still intact and even translations have tried to distort these traits. However, a person who honestly reflects on these traits will be compelled to acknowledge that they refer to no one other than the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). I will confine myself to these brief hints and inshallāh deal in detail with this issue in Sūrah ṣaff.

3. The third thing is that Jesus (sws) has mentioned very clearly the Qur’ān, the message of the Qur’ān and the nature of this message, the dominance of its message in the world and the various phases of this dominance. In verse nineteen of Sūrah Fath also, I will discuss this issue.

For the assurance of the readers, I am citing some references below:

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. (Matthew, 21:42-44)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever. (John, 14:17)

I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me. (John, 14:31)

There are numerous parables which depict the gradual expansion and growth of the Islamic dawah. One of these parables, which is also referred to by the Qur’ān, is thus:

He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches. (Matthew, 13:31-32)

4. The fourth important thing is that the impact of this clear testimony borne by Jesus (sws) is that those among people who were true Nazarenes and as such were followers of Simon, the true successor of Jesus (sws) professed faith in the Qur’ān with great zeal after it was revealed, and the Qur’ān has paid tribute to them in very majestic words. In Sūrah Mā'idah, this group is mentioned thus:

لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَوَدَّةً  
لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيَّيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا  
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَى أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا

عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٨٣-٨٢: ٥)

You will find that the most the Jews and the Idolaters to be the most blatant enemies of the believers and find the nearest in affection to them those who say: “We are Nazarenes.” This is because there are priests and monks among them; and because they are free from arrogance. When they listen to that which has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes fill with tears because they recognize the truth. They cry out: “Lord, we profess faith. So count us among the witnesses.” (5:82-83)

Readers may go through the explanation of these verses in this *tafsīr*. People are not very well aware of the history of the Nazarenes. That is why the real meaning of these verses could not become evident to them. They do not praise the followers of Paul; on the contrary, they praise the followers of Simon. The followers of Paul would also not call themselves as Nazarenes. They would think that this was a degrading word for them and in its place they adopted the word Christians for themselves. The followers of Simon indeed called themselves as Nazarenes. These people were the bearers of witness which was given by Jesus (sws) regarding the advent of the last messenger of God. The words رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (Lord! We profess faith. So count us among the witnesses,) point to this. These people were not inflicted with conceit the way Paul and his followers were. For this reason, they were blessed with the treasure of embracing Islam. It is about these people that Jesus (sws) had predicted: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” (Matthew, 5:3). In the verses of Sūrah Mā'idah quoted above, the words وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (and because they are free from arrogance) point to this very quality of theirs.

It is evident from all these details that the nature of Jesus' testimony is entirely different from a common testimony. The very objective of his prophethood was to pave the way for Muḥammad (sws) and to give glad tidings to mankind of the kingdom of heaven which was to be established through his hands. With reference to this, the Qur'ān conclusively communicated to both the Idolaters and the People of the Book the prophethood of Muḥammad. I have mentioned earlier on that in this phase of preaching of Muḥammad, the Idolaters were being backed by the People of the Book and as a result they were in very high spirits. The Qur'ān here has shown that in the frenzy of opposing Islam these Jews and Christians may do whatever they want to but a great witness from among the Israelites has already borne witness to this truth in



blatant words and has professed faith in it. After his professing faith and bearing witness those who merely on the basis of arrogance will deny the truth should fully contemplate the fate they will meet.

The words *إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ* refer to the established practice of God about blessing people with guidance and depriving them of it. I have referred to it many times in this *tafsīr*: God never guides those who wrong their souls and do not duly honour the light He blesses them with. He through a person's sense and reason and the testimony of the world within and that outside him as well through the testimony of His prophets and messengers has totally unveiled the truth. Now He is not responsible to guide all those people who instead of using all these sources as a means for their guidance are trying to use them to go astray. He leaves such people to wonder about.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَذَا إِفْكٌ قَدِيمٌ<sup>13</sup>

The arrogance of the rejecters of truth referred to in the previous verse is explained here: Such is the extent of the arrogance of these callous people that one argument they bring in their favour is that the poor were the first to accept Islam; their rich say that had there been any good in this religion it would not have been possible that these poor paupers had taken lead from them in accepting it. They meant that no favour or blessing of the world was given to these people; so had this religion also been a favour or blessing, these destitute would have never been able to outdo them in accepting it. Their outdoing them is evidence of the fact that there is no good in it; it, in fact, belongs to that category of things ordinary people are after.

The words *وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَذَا إِفْكٌ قَدِيمٌ* imply that now that instead of obtaining guidance from this light these people have led themselves in error through it, they will not stop at what they have said; they will further say that this is not a new lie; it is one that is being transmitted from ancient times; there have remained people in every age who have used these warnings as bluffs over others and never has what they said ever happened; they will further say that the Day of Judgement with which they are being warned never came nor will it ever

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13. The disbelievers said about the believers: "Had there been any good in the Qur'ān, these people would not have professed faith in it before us." And since they did not receive guidance from it, they will now say: "This is an old falsehood."

come; the lie of these people has been exposed and for this reason, they are not going to be bluffed by them.

It is evident from contextual indication that the words *كَفَرُوا* refer to the affluent among the disbelievers whose arrogance is mentioned in the previous verse. The words *لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* refer to the poor and destitute among the believers and the particle *ل* here occurs in the meaning of *في*. This usage can be seen at many places in the Qur'ān.

It is evident from the words *وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ* that when they have rejected a blatant truth, then in order to appease their conscience and to fool others they will have to fabricate more excuses. Thus they will say that this lie is an ancient one. The argument which they want to give by regarding it to be an ancient lie is that its falsity is a proven fact. If the Day of Judgement was to come, then why has it not appeared; it is being mentioned ever since a long time but never has it manifested itself.

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّتُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٢)<sup>14</sup>

This verse expresses the testimony of the Torah in favour of the Qur'ān. If chronology is to be kept in consideration, it should have been mentioned earlier; however, because of the special reasons which I have alluded to earlier the testimony of Jesus (sws) was mentioned first. This reference of the Torah expresses the continuity of the testimony: before this, the Book of Moses (sws) has come as an *imām* and mercy. The word *imām* means “guide”. This is exactly the same thing as has been stated about the Qur'ān by the words *هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً* (guidance and mercy). I have explained that these words are used with respect to both this world and the next. The Book of God guides people in this world and in the next becomes a means of God's mercy. Its real nature is that of a leader. Just as it is essential that a leader be obeyed, it is essential that this Book be obeyed in the matters of this world. If this status of this Book is not acknowledged, then however much it may be respected by the tongue and however much it may be kissed to honour it, all these acts are meaningless in the eyes of God.

The words *وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا* refer to the Qur'ān: it was

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14. And before it the Book of Moses is present: a guide and a blessing. And this Book is in confirmation of its predictions. It is in the Arabic tongue, to forewarn those who have wronged their souls and is glad tidings for the righteous.

revealed in Arabic in confirmation of the predictions of the Torah. Just as Jesus (sws) has borne witness to it, in a similar way, Moses (sws) too has made predictions about it earlier on. These predictions were awaiting to be materialized. The revelation of the Qur'ān was a materialization of these predictions and in this manner the Qur'ān attested the Torah.

Generally, people have interpreted this verse to mean that since Qur'ān accepts the Torah as a divine book, hence the Qur'ān too is a divine Book. This is an absolutely absurd interpretation. If the Qur'ān regards the Torah to be a divine Book, then this indeed is an argument to regard the Torah to be divine; but how can this prove the Qur'ān to be divine. The Qur'ān can be attested to be divine by the Torah only when from within its texts are predictions about it and its bearer, and with the revelation of the Qur'ān and the advent of the Prophet (sws) these predictions are attested to in such a manner that no just person can refute them; in fact, every honest and unbiased person will whole-heartedly acknowledge that these predictions have truly materialized and the person who was referred to by them has actually substantiated these predictions. It is with regard to this aspect that the Qur'ān has been called the attester (*miṣdāq*) to the previous scriptures, and not with regard to the aspect generally understood by people. The Qur'ān indeed regards these scriptures to be divine but at the same time declares them to be inflicted with corruptions. For this reason, this attestation is not absolute; it is specific to the meaning I have just explained. It is very common in Arabic to use the word *taṣdīq* in this meaning. I have explained this usage earlier in this *tafsīr*.

The words لَسَاءًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا express a favour done to the Quraysh and also refer to some predictions made by the Torah. The first of these aspects is evident: God by revealing the Qur'ān in Arabic enhanced the respect commanded by the language, lent it the sanction of eternal existence, chose the Arabs to communicate and bear witness to His religion and left them with no excuse to deny the truth. With regard to the second aspect, it should be kept in mind that it is found in the Torah about the last Messenger that he will be from among the unlettered ie. the Ishmaelites. It is obvious that the language of these unlettered people was Arabic; thus a reference to their language is in fact a reference to the Arabs themselves.

The words لِّيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا allude to the objective of this Book: the Almighty has revealed this Book so that people who have wronged themselves by being incriminated with polytheism and disbelief be informed of their fate so that those who want to reform themselves can do so before materialization of the final consequences.

The words **وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ** allude to the second objective of this Book: it is a great and eternal glad tiding for the righteous. Since this is the real objective of the Book, it is mentioned in the form of a noun. The word **الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا** occurs here in contrast to **الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا**. This contrast highlights the meaning of the word: it refers to people who guarded all their potentials and abilities and spent their lives within the limits stipulated by their Creator.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ <sup>15</sup> (١٣-١٤)

These verses not only explain the glad tiding referred to in the previous verse, but also refer to a specific trait of the righteous. The verse says that people who accepted the true calls of the Qur’ān and declared that only God was their Lord and fearlessly adhered to this declaration in spite of every opposition are given an eternal glad tiding: they will neither have any fear of the future nor any sorrow of the past; they will be the eternal dwellers of Paradise which will be given to them as a reward of their deeds.

## Section II: Verses (15-20)

In the coming verses, in order to assure the Prophet (sws), he is informed of the type of people to whom this Book will appeal to and the type who will always remain put off from it. This in fact is a further elaboration of the two categories of people referred to earlier by the words **الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا** and **الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا**. It is evident from this that people who have an upright nature, who are sensitive to the truth, who control their emotions, who recognize the rights of their parents will be the ones who will fulfill the rights of their parents. The message of the Qur’ān will appeal to them. As far as those people are concerned who live without any sense of accountability and are indifferent to their responsibilities as well as their rights and obligations, one should not expect any good from them; they will do what they are doing and end up with the same fate which is destined for such indifferent people. Readers may now proceed to recite the next section of verses.

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15. Indeed, people who affirmed: “Our Lord is God,” and then persevered on it shall have nothing to fear or to be sad about. It is they who are the dwellers of Paradise; they will abide in it forever. This will be a reward for their labours.

**Text and Translation**

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٥) أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَتَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَدَ الصَّدَقِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ (١٦) وَالَّذِي قَالَ لِوَالِدَيْهِ أُفٍّ لَّكُمَا أَتَعِدَانِي أَنْ أَخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلْتُ الْقُرُونُ مِنْ قَبْلِي وَهُمَا يَسْتَعْجِلَانِ اللَّهَ وَيْلَكَ آمِنْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَيَقُولُ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٧) أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمِّ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ (١٨) وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَاتٍ مِمَّا عَمِلُوا وَلِيُوقَّيَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (١٩) وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبَاتِكُمْ فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهَا فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْسُقُونَ (٢٠)

And We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. With pain his mother bore him, and with pain she delivered him. And bearing him and weaning him took thirty months. So that when he grows to manhood and attains his fortieth year, he prays: "Lord! Take hold of me that I may be able to express my gratitude to You for the favours You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and to do good deeds which will please You. And grant me good descendants. To You I turn and to You I submit." These are the people from whom We will accept their good deeds and overlook their misdeeds with the Companions of Paradise. This is a true promise which is being made to them. (15-16)

As for he who rebukes his parents and says to them: "Shame on you! Do you threaten me that I will be brought to life again even though generations have passed before me?" – and they are beseeching God: "cursed be you! have faith; the promise of God is true"; so he thus replies: "All these are but tales ancient." These are the people for whom the threat of God materialized with bygone nations of jinn and men. Indeed, they were among those who did not succeed. (17-18)

And for each of them are ranks in accordance with their deeds [so that the promise of God may come true] and so that He may duly give them all their deeds and they shall not be wronged. And remember the day

when the disbelievers will be brought before Hell and they will be told: “You took away the good things of your share in your earthly life and used them. So today you will get a humiliating torment in return because you showed conceit in this world without any right and because you remained disobedient.” (19-20)

### Explanation

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٥)

This, as we have indicated before, is an explanation of how the natural evolution and development of the comprehension of rights and obligations takes place or should take place in an upright and worthy person. The verse says that the Almighty has enjoined man to treat his parents with kindness. He has also ingrained this directive in man's nature and all the prophets of God and righteous people also taught this. In all religions of the world, this is an acknowledged reality that after God the parents have the greatest right on a person. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that as far as comprehension is concerned, it is the right of the parents which a person feels the foremost. It is through the comprehension of his parent's right that he reaches God and the comprehension of His rights. As long as he remains an infant, he considers his parents to be everything because whatever he acquires, he acquires from him. However, once he reaches maturity, he becomes aware of the fact that the real Lord and Bestower of Favours is the one who even created his parents. In this manner, through his parents, he reaches God, and he becomes aware of a being Who has a greater right on him than his parents. And these two are the greatest rights on a person and from these two emanate the branches of various other rights.

The right of the parents on a person is that when he reaches his bloom

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16. And We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. With pain his mother bore him, and with pain she delivered him. And bearing him and weaning him took thirty months. So that when he grows to manhood and attains his fortieth year, he prays: “Lord! Take hold of me that I may be able to express my gratitude to You for the favours You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and to do good deeds which will please You. And grant me good descendants.

and they reach old age, he should not consider them to be a burden on him. In fact, he should remember that there was a time when he was thrown in their laps in the form of a lump of meat; but, instead of regarding him to be a burden, they regarded him to be the radiance of their eyes and the comfort of their hearts and brought him up. The obligation he owes to them for this favour of theirs is that he should always show obedience to them and show love and affection to them. He should not regard serving them to be a burden on him nor should he utter any words of repulsion to them.

The words *حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفَصَالَتْهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا* refer to the sacrifices which every mother necessarily makes for her children. The purpose of this reference is to direct attention to the fact that whatever may the children do, they can never repay the favours of their parents. The verse says that a mother carries her child for months in her womb and then delivers it while risking her own life. After that comes the time of suckling the child. For two whole years, she feeds the child with her milk with great effort and raises and nurtures it. The implication is that no one can match her effort. Is there anyone who can bear so many hardships with such happiness? So how great an expression of ingratitude will it be from the children if they forget these favours and when the parents need these from the children, they show indifference.

Here, an important point worthy of note is that the demand for showing kindness relates both to the mother and the father; however, the three sacrifices mentioned only relate to the mother. No sacrifice of the father is mentioned. In my opinion, this is because of the following reasons:

1. The extent of role a mother plays in the initial upbringing of the child is much more than that of a father. Thus it is mentioned in a narrative that the Prophet (sws) has regarded a mother's right to be thrice that of the father viz a viz serving her.<sup>17</sup> This narrative is based on this very verse.

2. The mother belongs to the weaker gender. This aspect necessitates that the children obey and serve her more than the father.

3. To a father primarily relates the financial interest of the children. Since they are to inherit wealth and property from him, there is lesser fear of the children disobeying him. On the other hand, in general circumstances, this is not the case with the mother and for this reason those people do not duly value her are the ones who do not have the correct awareness of the sacrifices made by her.

From the words *حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفَصَالَتْهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا* some jurists among the

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17. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, 2227, (no. 5626).

Companions have deduced that the shortest period of pregnancy is six months because here the total time period for pregnancy and suckling is mentioned as thirty months, and at another place in the Qur'ān it is mentioned that the suckling period spans two full years. If this two year period is subtracted from these thirty months, six months remain for the pregnancy period, which shows that its shortest duration is six months. This is a subtle deduction and it is evident from various narratives that such senior Companions as 'Uthmān (rta) and 'Alī (rta) have expressed their agreement to this opinion.

The words **حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي دُرِّيَّتِي إِنَّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ** imply that when a person who recognizes the rights of his parents reaches the age of maturity, this upright nature of his also necessarily awakens in him the true comprehension of his Lord. In the reflection of the love and affection shown by his parents and in their diligence in raising him, he sees a glimpse of the love and affection and providence of the real Creator and from here he be able to access the path that leads him to his real Lord Who blessed him with affectionate parents for his upbringing. In other words, the awareness of a right induces him to fulfill a greater right. If the sensitivity of fulfilling the rights of the parents is not found in a person, then he cannot be aware of fulfilling the rights of God. It is the rights of the parents which are the sign-posts that take him to this destination. A person who did not open this door will find the next path closed to him.

The verse says that when such an upright person reaches maturity, in particular, the age of forty, he prays to God to take hold of him so that he is able to find the urge in himself to express his gratitude to God for His favours done to him and to his parents and to do such pious deeds as please God. He also prays to God that He bless him with pious descendents and that he has turned to Him and made a commitment to Him to remain obedient to Him.

The real time for this awareness is youth or the age of maturity which is termed here as **بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ**. However, the real factor to attain this maturity is not merely age; in fact, factors such as environment, education and moral training besides others also have a great role to play; hence, this age of maturity is not the same in all people. Thus, there exists a difference of opinion in this issue between our scholars and there are very understandable reasons for this. In my opinion, the Almighty has placed great variation in it keeping in view our weaknesses and forty years mentioned here is the last limit of this age. The implication is that



once a person becomes a young adult, this awareness should be awakened in every upright person. If in someone because of some adverse factors, it is not awakened or is not fully awakened, then it must appear by the age of forty. If after attaining even this age it does not appear, then it means that that a person has perverted his nature. It is evident from this that the Gracious and Merciful God will treat us leniently till the age of forty keeping in view our various weaknesses. The reason obviously is that because till this age there is a great influence of emotions and desires on a person. Even if he tries to mend his ways, he, at times, loses his way by being overwhelmed by these emotions and desires. After the age of forty, these emotions lose force. If he does not stimulate them wrongly, he can control and discipline them. For this reason, he should not expect any further lenience after this age.

It should be kept in mind that what is said here is said while keeping in mind the general circumstances and general types of human nature. It is not said while keeping in view a pure Islamic society and environment. In a society afflicted with evil, there are many adverse factors which hinder a person's resolve. For this reason, the Almighty treats such people with special lenience who try to reform themselves in such a society. In an Islamic society, these adverse factors do not exist; for this reason, its people will face more rigorous standards of accountability.

The word *أَوْزَعْنِي* has been explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Naml. It means "get hold of me", "take control of me". In other words the implied meaning is: "Lord! Till now I have been carried away by my emotions; please now give me the urge that instead of being carried away by the frenzy of my emotions, I am able to express gratitude to Your innumerable favours You have done to me and my parents." It should be kept in mind here that this feeling of gratitude is the foundation of all aspects of religion. I have discussed this in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Fātiḥah.

The words *وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ* imply that feelings of gratitude necessarily motivate a person to pious deeds and pious deeds are deeds in which a person seeks the pleasure of God instead of going after his own whims and desires. At times, there is a misconception which a person comes across in this way: he does something in his own estimation to please God but instead of pleasing Him, it angers Him. For example, deeds which are virtues outwardly but are incriminated with polytheism and innovations. For this reason, a person should continue to also pray to God to guide him to those virtuous deeds which please God.

The words *وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي* say that, at the same time, he prays for his progeny that God bless him with noble descendents from among them so

that he not only feels proud in this world but in the next also their pious deeds are able to intercede for him. I have already explained this subject in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Furqān under the following verse:

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا فُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا  
(٢٥: ٧٤)

And those who say: “Our Lord! Bless us with the comfort of our eyes from our wives and children and make us the leaders of the righteous. (25:74)

The words *وَإِنِّي تَبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ* express his pious declaration regarding the future: he has turned to God and solemnly promised to remain among His faithful servants.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَنَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ  
وَعَدَ الصَّدِّيقِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ<sup>18</sup> (١٦)

The verse says that it is these people whose good deeds God will accept and whose sins He will forgive.

The words *فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ* express the state (*ḥāl*); ie. they will be dealt with the way the dwellers of Paradise are and they will be regarded among them.

The verbal noun *وَعَدَ الصَّدِّيقِ* here is declined in the accusative as an emphasized object (*maf'ūl muṭlaq*). It is a true and firm promise and there is no possibility of its violation.

This verse as I have referred to earlier is an exhortation to the young adults particularly people who have reached the age of forty; in fact, it is more of warning as it tells them that this is the last age for them to mend their ways. If even after this they do not do so, they will deprive themselves of God's lenience.

وَالَّذِي قَالَ لِوَالِدَيْهِ أُفٍّ لَكُمَا أَتَعِدَانِي أَنْ أُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلْتُ الْقُرُونُ مِنْ قَبْلِي وَهُمَا  
يَسْتَعْجِلَانِ اللَّهَ وَيْلَكَ آمِنْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَيَقُولُ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ<sup>19</sup> (١٧)

18. To You I turn and to You I submit.” These are the people from whom We will accept their good deeds and overlook their misdeeds with the Companions of Paradise. This is a true promise which is being made to them.

19. As for he who rebukes his parents and says to them: “Shame on you! Do

This is a mention of people who lead a life of indifference and have no fear of any accountability whatsoever.

I have pointed out at a number of places in this *tafsīr* that when الَّذِي is used to cite a parable, it does not necessarily refer to a specific person; in fact, it refers to every person on whom the parable can apply. A very clear example of this can be seen in verse ninety two of Sūrah Nahl. In the verse under discussion too the case is no different. Thus in the succeeding verses it is mentioned in the plural form. People who are not aware of this linguistic style of Arabic try at every place to regard الَّذِي as referring to a specific individual. They tread far beyond the real meaning of the verse. Thus here too some people have regarded it to refer to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (rta), the son of Abū Bakr (rta).<sup>20</sup> Though our exegetes have rejected this view; however, their rejection is not based on any sound reason. Thus the question still remains that if the word الَّذِي refers to a defined noun, then who is it alluding to in this verse? This question does not arise in the way I have interpreted it.

These verses depict a group in contrast to the one mentioned earlier. It is said that the young adults who lead an indifferent and careless life never have the urge to assess their deeds. When their parents caution them on their ill-ways and remind them of God and the Hereafter, they badly scold them. Their parents very affectionately and sympathetically try to urge their son to adopt the path of righteousness and to be aware that certain is the promise of God. In response, he says that are they threatening him that he will be raised to life again from his grave; this is a very improbable thing; generation after generation has passed and none of them has been raised to life; so how can he believe of his own resurrection to life; in fact, all these are tales of the ancient; there are people in every age who say these meaningless things that the Day of Judgement is coming; on the contrary, it was never supposed to come; so it neither came nor will it ever come.

The word وَيْلَكَ أَمِنْ in وَيْل generally expresses curse and condemnation; however, at times, it expresses concern, compassion and affection. Several apt examples of this usage can be seen in classical Arabic literature. Here too it is used in this connotation. The Qur’ān says that some parents very compassionately try to convince their child by saying: “Cursed be you! Don’t be obdurate; desist from your evil ways; adopt the

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you threaten me that I will be brought to life again even though generations have passed before me?” – and they are beseeching God: “cursed be you! have faith; the promise of God is true”; so he thus replies: “all these are but tales ancient.”

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20. See, for example: Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, vol. 19, 26.

path of your faith and fear the Hereafter.” However, instead of benefiting from this affection of theirs, he scolds them with great abhorrence.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمِّ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا  
خَاسِرِينَ (١٨)<sup>21</sup>

This verse portrays the fate of the people referred to in the previous verse. Here the pronouns, demonstrative nouns and verbs are all in the plural. So much so, the word has الَّذِي become الَّذِينَ. This is a clear proof of the fact that the previous verse does not refer to some specific individual; it, in fact, alludes to a certain category of people. The verse says that these are the people on which the statement of God was fulfilled. The expression “statement of God” points to the answer God gave to Iblīs in response to his challenge viz: He will fill Hell with Iblīs and all those human beings and jinn who will follow him. The occasion of placement of the words فِي أُمِّ is exactly the same as of فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ in the previous verse. The purpose is to emphatically communicate to them that they will become the companions of those human beings and jinn who before them had ruined their Hereafter by spending their lives in indifference and carelessness.

وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا وَلِيُؤْفَيَهُمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (١٩)<sup>22</sup>

The word كُلِّ refers to both the groups mentioned earlier. The verse says that both these groups will be rewarded in accordance with their deeds. Those who recognized the rights of their parents and their Lord and also fulfilled them will be rewarded with their respective level in Paradise. Those who led a life of indifference and apathy will be cast into that section of Hell which is commensurate with the evil deeds they committed. The word دَرَجَاتٍ is mentioned by referring to the dominant element (‘*alā sabīl taghlīb*’); the lowest level will in fact be no level.

The clause to which the expression وَلِيُؤْفَيَهُمْ is appended to is suppressed here. Examples of such a suppression can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* as well. In my translation, I have unveiled this suppression.

21. These are the people for whom the threat of God materialized with bygone nations of jinn and men. Indeed, they were among those who did not succeed.

22. And for each of them are ranks in accordance with their deeds [so that the promise of God may come true] and so that He may duly give them all their deeds and they shall not be wronged.

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبَاتِكُمْ فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهَا فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْسُقُونَ (٢٠)<sup>23</sup>

Though the previous verse briefly mentions the fate of deeds of both the groups, this verse specifically addresses the arrogant among the Quraysh. Hence their fate is specially referred to. The verse says that the day should be kept in remembrance when these arrogant people will be called forth before Hell and they will be told that they have fully benefited in the previous world from the favours ordained for them; now only a humiliating torment awaits them because in the previous world they showed arrogance and haughtiness without any right and continued to disobey God's directives.

The words أَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبَاتِكُمْ refer to the fact that they have consumed their share of favours. If people who are blessed with favours in this world show gratitude to God and fulfill the rights of His creatures, they gather more favours for the Hereafter. On the contrary, people who become arrogant and conceited after being blessed with favours, they consume their quota of favours in this very world; in the Hereafter, they will be punished for not fulfilling their obligations towards these favours.

The words بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ which qualify the arrogance and haughtiness shown by them expresses the fact that since God blesses them with all the favours, what right has a person to show such behaviour after receiving them. It is only befitting for a person to show pride when he himself is the originator of something and without any role played by God acquires something on the basis of his own personal ability. When everything is God-given, then showing pride is absolute foolishness and ignorance and an even greater foolishness is that a person uses the very favours blessed to him by God in disobeying Him.

### Section III (Verses 21-28)

This section of verses briefly portrays the denial of the 'Ād nation and

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23. And remember the day when the disbelievers will be brought before Hell and they will be told: "You took away the good things of your share in your earthly life and used them. So today you will get a humiliating torment in return because you showed conceit in this world without any right and because you remained disobedient."

their fate. The purpose is to assure the Prophet (sws) and to warn the arrogant Quraysh that if they do not desist from their attitude, they too will end up with a similar fate.

Readers may now proceed forth.

### Text and Translation

وَاذْكُرْ أَخَا عَادٍ إِذْ أَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ النُّجُومُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٢١) قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِتَأْفِكَنَا عَنْ آلِهَتِنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٢٢) قَالَ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأُبَلِّغُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ (٢٣) فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُسْتَقْبِلَ أَوْدِيَّتِهِمْ قَالُوا هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُمْطِرُنَا بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهِ رِيحٌ فِيهَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢٤) تَدْمُرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا لَا يُرَى إِلَّا مَسَاكِينُهُمْ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٢٥) وَلَقَدْ مَكَنَّاهُمْ فِيهَا إِنْ مَكَنَّاكُمْ فِيهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَارًا وَأَفْئِدَةً فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَا أَفْئِدَتُهُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ كَانُوا يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (٢٦) وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْقُرَىٰ وَصَرَّفْنَا الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٢٧) فَلَوْلَا نَصْرُهُمُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ قُرْبَانًا آلِهَةً بَلْ صَلَّوْا عَنْهُمْ وَذَلِكَ إِفْكُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَفْقَرُونَ (٢٨)

And remember the brother of ‘Ād when he informed his people in Aḥqāf: “Worship none other than God. I fear for you the torment of a fateful day.” And in front and behind him informers had already come. They replied: “Have you come to turn us away from our gods by telling a lie? So bring down the scourge you threaten us with, if you are truthful!” He said: “God alone has true knowledge about it. I am only conveying to you the message I have been sent with. But I can see that you are afflicted with sheer ignorance.” (21-23)

And when they saw the scourge in the form of a cloud heading for their valleys, they said: “This is a passing cloud that will drench us.” “By no means! It is that what you had been seeking to hasten: it is a hurricane which contains a woeful scourge. It will totally rout everything at the bidding of its Lord.” Thus they became such that there was nothing to be seen besides their dwellings. Thus do We punish the wrongdoers. (24-25)

And We had made them wealthy and powerful to the extent which We did not make you and gave them ears and eyes and hearts. But since they

remained deniers of God's signs nothing did their ears, their eyes, or their hearts avail them. The thing they had been making fun of encompassed them. And We destroyed the cities around you, and presented Our signs to their people in various styles so that they may take heed. So why did their deities not help them – the deities they had set up besides God to bring them close to Him? Indeed, all of them became useless to them and this was their lie and fabrication. (26-28)

### Explanation

وَاذْكُرْ أَخَا عَادٍ إِذْ أَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ النُّذُرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٢٤)

The words أَخَا عَادٍ refer to the prophet Hūd (rta) who was sent as a Messenger to the nation of 'Ād. He belonged to this nation and hence is called the brother of the 'Ād. The fact that a messenger belongs to his own nation has many significant aspects with regard to the conclusive communication of the truth that I have been explaining in this *tafsīr*.

Lexicons say that the word أَحْقَاف refers to rectangular sand dunes;<sup>25</sup> however, here it refers to the desert which stretches between Oman, Yemen, Najd and Hadrmaut and is also called by the name أَحْقَاف (Aḥqāf). It is the original dwelling place of the people of 'Ād. By mentioning this place by its name, the Qur'ān has directed attention to the great destruction that took place in this area. Obviously, the era in which the nation of 'Ād was at its peak in this area would be the time when this area would have been very green and lush and impregnated with those great cultural feats which made the 'Ād very famous and powerful in history. However, now that area is no more than a desolate desert. Nobody can imagine that this place was once inhabited and bustling with life. In my opinion, this place was named as Aḥqāf after the decline of the 'Ād when in place of majestic structures only sand dunes remained.

The words وَقَدْ خَلَتْ النُّذُرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ are a parenthetical sentence. The word نُّذُر is the plural of نَذِير (warner). The implication is that the warnings sounded by the Prophet Hūd (sws) are nothing new. Warners have already come to territories in front of his and those behind it and the signs of the torment with which they had threatened people were also present there. However, just as the earlier generations did not

24. And remember the brother of 'Ād when he informed his people in Aḥqāf: "Worship none other than God. I fear for you the torment of a fateful day." And in front and behind him informers had already come.

25. See, for example: Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 5, 304.

take heed from their respective warners, these later generations also did not benefit from the warnings of their warner.

The words **أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ** express the real warning sounded by the Prophet Hūd (rta) to his people. He asked them not to worship anyone other than God; if they do not desist from worshipping others besides God, then he fears that the torment of a dreadful day will waylay them. It is evident from this that the real basis of evil is polytheism. From this evil springs the branches of all other evils. For this very reason, the Messengers of God have informed their people about it the foremost and have told them that if people do not desist from it, they will become targets of God's grueling scourge. Polytheism on this earth is no less than high treason against God. For this reason, the nation to which God conclusively delivers the truth is not granted further respite if it does not abstain from it.

قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِنَأْفِكَنَّ عَنْ آلِهَتِنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٢٢)

The word **إِفْكٌ** means “to tell a lie.” The preposition **عَنْ** after it shows that this word encompasses the meaning of another word which means “to cause someone to give up something or to cause someone to turn away from something.” In other words, they answer the Prophet Hūd (sws) by exclaiming that he has come to them as a messenger to bluff them about his messengerhood as well as about a punishment in order to turn them away from their deities; if this is the case, then he should bring forth this doom he is threatening them with; unless this demand is met, they will not regard him to be a true messenger.

قَالَ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأُبَلِّغُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ (٢٣)

In response to their demand to bring God's punishment, Hūd told them that he was asked by God to inform them about it; thus he has done this; as far as its time of arrival and the form in which it will manifest itself are concerned, only God has their knowledge; he does not have any information about them; however, he is observing that they are inflicted with sheer ignorance; instead of thinking of ways and means to halt this punishment, they are calling for its advent; he is not one to bring this

26. They replied: “Have you come to turn us away from our gods by telling a lie? So bring down the scourge you threaten us with, if you are truthful!”

27. He said: “God alone has true knowledge about it. I am only conveying to you the message I have been sent with. But I can see that you are afflicted with sheer ignorance.”



danger; he is one to forewarn them of it.

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُسْتَقْبِلَ أَوْدِيَّتِهِمْ قَالُوا هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُمِطِرُنَا بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهِ رِيحٌ فِيهَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ<sup>28</sup> (٢٤)

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun in رَأَوْهُ is the punishment mentioned in the previous verse. The word عَارِضٌ means “cloud” and here it is an accusative of state (*ḥāl*). The implied meaning is that when the very punishment they wanted to hasten descended on their valleys in the form of a cloud, they were overjoyed remarking that it was a rain-drenched cloud that will drench their valleys.

The words بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهِ imply that the circumstances showed what they thought to be a rain-drenched cloud was, on the contrary, the punishment they wanted to hasten.

The words رِيحٌ فِيهَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ delineate the nature of this punishment: it was a stormy wind that concealed the punishment. At another place in the Qur’ān, this stormy wind is called صرصر which blew on them for many days and totally routed them. It is mentioned thus in Sūrah ḥāqqah:

وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَانِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَى كَأَنَّهُمْ أُعِجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ (٦٩: ٦-٧)

And as for the ‘Ād, they were destroyed by an uncontrollable storm. God let loose it on them for seven nights and eight days to ravage them. You would have seen them lying overthrown as though they were hollow trunks of palm-trees. (69:6-7)

تُدْمِرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا لَا يُرَى إِلَّا مَسَاكِنُهُمْ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ<sup>29</sup> (٢٥)

This is a reference to the way the tempestuous wind mentioned earlier routed them; nothing except the signs of their destroyed dwellings could be seen.

The words كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ point to the fact that it should not

28. And when they saw the scourge in the form of a cloud heading for their valleys, they said: “This is a passing cloud that will drench us.” “By no means! It is that what you had been seeking to hasten: it is a hurricane which contains a woeful scourge.

29. It will totally rout everything at the bidding of its Lord.” Thus they became such that there was nothing to be seen besides their dwellings. Thus do We punish the wrongdoers.

be construed that this is a mere tale of yester years; the fact of the matter is that the Almighty always punishes the wrongdoers in such a fashion. So if the Quraysh too adopt the same attitude as that of the 'Ād, there is no reason that God deal differently with them. They too shall necessarily meet the same fate because God's law is the same for all.

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِيمَا إِنْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِيهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَارًا وَأَفْئِدَةً فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَا أَفْئِدَتُهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ كَانُوا يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ<sup>30</sup>

The Quraysh are directly addressed here and the lesson which they should have learnt from it is put forth before them. They are told that the abundance in means and resources enjoyed by the 'Ād as well as the majesty and power reflected in their phenomenal ability to build and construct was much more than what the Quraysh possessed. But when God seized them, they were not able to save themselves. He blessed them with all the abilities of hearing and sight and also blessed them with sense and intellect; however, since they were not prepared to accept the light of God's revelations, their ears, eyes and hearts could be of no avail to them; in spite of possessing all the intelligence, they were seized by the very torment of God they had been making fun of.

It is evident from these details that the real light of the ears, eyes and hearts is produced by the revelations of God. If these faculties are not lit up by the radiance of God's revelations, they can only feel and see the apparent and the tangible. And here too, people spend all their might to earn material benefits. The result of being slaves to the apparent and the tangible is that these abilities and faculties become rusty. A person is not able to look and reflect beyond the apparent and material aspects of things nor does he think that there is any such need even though the real aspect that requires deliberation is the one beyond what is the apparent and the tangible. It is because of this that the Qur'ān (7:179) has commented about such people that they have ears but they hear not and they have eyes but they see not and they have hearts but they understand not.

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30. And We had made them wealthy and powerful to the extent which We did not make you and gave them ears and eyes and hearts. But since they remained deniers of God's signs nothing did their ears, their eyes, or their hearts avail them. The thing they had been making fun of encompassed them.

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْقَرْيِ وَصَرَّفْنَا الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ <sup>31</sup>(٢٧)

This verse also addresses the Quraysh. They are told that if the anecdote of the ‘Ād is distant history, they should reflect on their surroundings. In order to remove the veils stretched before the eyes and hearts of these people, God’s signs were presented to them in various styles and forms so that they turn to their real Creator and Master. But they rejected these signs as a result of which God destroyed them.

This is a reference to the demolished and wrecked cities which the Quraysh had the opportunity to pass by in their trade journeys.

فَلَوْلَا نَصْرُهُمُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ قُرْبَانًا آلِهَةً بَلْ ضَلُّوا عَنْهُمْ وَذَلِكَ إِفْكُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ <sup>32</sup>(٢٨)

This verse poses a question before the Quraysh: if they think that their deities will be able to save them from God’s grasp, then why did they not do so in the case of the earlier peoples. These people too had taken up these deities thinking them to be a means to God’s nearness. The words *بَلْ ضَلُّوا عَنْهُمْ* say that at the very moment when their help was needed, they were lost to them and none could be of any benefit to them.

The words *وَمَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ* point to the fact that all this was a lie and fabrication from them. They regarded them to be deities from their own fancies and then falsely ascribed them to be God’s favourites and that He has regarded them to be His partners.

The word *قُرْبَانًا* is a causative object (*maf‘ūl lahū*). This is a reference to the belief of the Idolaters alluded to in the verse: *مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ* (٣:٣٩) (we worship them only that they may bring us as near to God as possible, (39:3)).

It needs to be kept in consideration that the deities these Idolaters worshipped were not worshipped by them because they thought that these deities were the creators and masters of the creatures; they worshipped them because they thought that they were God’s favourites and worshipping these deities would bring them closer to God. This belief of them regarding angels is discussed at many places in this *tafsīr*.

31. And We destroyed the cities around you, and presented Our signs to their people in various styles so that they may take heed.

32. So why did their deities not help them – the deities they had set up besides God to bring them close to Him? Indeed, all of them became useless to them and this was their lie and fabrication.

## Section IV: Verses (29-35)

In this section, the Prophet (sws) is assured in a few verses to not be sad if his people are not duly honouring this Book. The blame does not lie on the Book or on him; it is their own crooked nature which is responsible for their aversion. The fact of the matter is that so moving and affective is this Book that if a group of pious jinn was able to hear it by a chance, they became fully attentive to it and went back to their people with its message to reform them through it. It is a pity if these people for whom this Book has been revealed are not valuing it.

In the closing verses of the *sūrah*, the disbelievers are warned and threatened and the Prophet (sws) is urged to show patience and forbearance.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to study these verses.

## Text and Translation

وَإِذْ صَرَفْنَا إِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقُرْآنَ فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوهُ قَالُوا أَنْصِتُوا فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ (٢٩) قَالُوا يَا قَوْمَنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتَابًا أُنْزِلَ مِن بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ وَإِلَىٰ طَرِيقٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٣٠) يَا قَوْمَنَا أَجِيبُوا دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ وَآمِنُوا بِهِ يَغْفِرَ لَكُم مِّن ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُجِرْكُم مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٣١) وَمَنْ لَا يُجِبِ دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءُ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٢) أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَمْ يَعْجُرْهُنَّ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُخَيِّطَ الْمَوْتَىٰ بَلَىٰ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٣٣) وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَلَيْسَ هَٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَرَبَّنَا قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٣٤) فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ كَانَتْهُمْ يُومَ يَرُونَ مَا يُوْعَدُونَ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّن نَّهَارٍ بَلَاغٌ فَمَهْلُ يُهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٣٥)

And bear in mind when We directed a band of jinn to you that they may listen to the Qur'an. So when they came to him they said to each other: "Listen by remaining silent." As soon as it finished, they returned to their people giving them warning. They said: "Our people! We have been listening to a scripture revealed after Moses in confirmation of the predictions that exist about it beforehand. This Book guides towards the

truth and to a straight path. O People of Ours! Answer the call of God's summoner and profess faith in him! God will forgive your sins and give you refuge from a woeful scourge. (29-31)

And he who does not that pay heed to God's summoner should remember that he is not beyond God's grasp in this earth nor shall there be anyone to help him against God. These are the people who are in open error. Have they not reflected that the God Who created the heavens and the earth and was not fatigued by their creation also has the power to raise the dead to life? Yes. He has power over all things. (32-33)

And keep in mind the Day when the disbelievers are brought before Hell. They shall be asked: "Is this not real?" They will reply: "Yes, by our Lord! This is real." It shall be said to them: "Then taste the torment as a punishment of your disbelief." (34)

Thus persevere the way other steadfast messengers persevered and do not seek to hurry for them. The day they behold what they are being threatened with they will feel as if they did not stay more than an hour of day. Thus it is to communicate! Ultimately, death is surely for those who are the disobedient. (35)

### Explanation

وَإِذْ صَرَفْنَا إِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقُرْآنَ فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوهُ قَالُوا أَنْصِتُوا فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ (٢٩)<sup>33</sup>

It is evident from the word *صَرَفْنَا* that the incident of the jinn overhearing the Qur'an was a chance happening ordained by God. Neither did the Prophet (sws) make any special arrangement for it nor did the jinn have any prior intention to listen to it. It is God Who all of a sudden directed the attention of a group of them to do so. Thus they heard it and were so moved by it that they became its ardent admirers and not only this, they embarked upon a mission of calling their people towards it.

It is evident from various narratives that this incident took place when the Prophet (sws) reached Nakhlah to spend a night there on his way back from Ṭā'if – very much dejected at what had happened there. It was here that in one of his night prayers when he was reciting out the Qur'an, a group of jinn chanced by and overheard his recital. The effect it had on

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33. And bear in mind when We directed a band of jinn to you that they may listen to the Qur'an. So when they came to him they said to each other: "Listen by remaining silent." As soon as it finished, they returned to their people giving them warning.

them is referred to earlier and more details will follow in the succeeding verses. The purpose of mentioning this incident is to highlight the fact that the people for whom this Book was revealed and for whose reformation the Messenger of God was diligently striving and to find whom he journeyed from Makkah to Ṭā'if, they were neither willing to hear it out and on the contrary were adopting a very despicable attitude with the Messenger whereas the upright among the jinn who accidentally heard a few of its verses were so stirred by it that they became its fervent proponents among their people. It is thus evident that the fault does not lie in the Qur'ān or its bearer; it lies in the people themselves who were evading it.

The words فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوهُ قَالُوا أَنْصِتُوا imply that as soon as they heard the Qur'ān, they beckoned their companions to silently and respectfully hear these divine words so that God may have mercy on them. This reference to the respect and becoming behaviour shown by them is a slant on the misdemeanour and misbehaviour shown by the miscreants of Makkah and Ṭā'if mentioned at various in the Qur'ān. They were the ones who would teach their associates to create a rumpus when the Qur'ān is read out so that its voice is stifled and they remain dominant. This attitude of theirs is mentioned thus in Sūrah Jinn: وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ (and that when this servant of Allah stands to invoke only Him, it seems as if they will rush upon him, (72:19)).

The words فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ bear testimony to the true and factual influence this recital had on them: they did not stop at merely praising and lauding its words; they embarked upon a campaign to inform their people of the danger this Book was informing people. It should remain evident that there are always people in the worst of times who may commend what is good and true; however, there is no significance of this praise unless a practical change comes in a person's life through it. In these times also, there are numerous people who eulogize and extol the eloquence and articulacy of the Qur'ān; however, virtually non-existent are those who abide by its directives in their practical lives. The verse under discussion states that these jinn while becoming fearless of all dangers embarked upon proclaiming this Book in their decadent society.

قَالُوا يَا قَوْمَنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتَابًا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ  
وَأِلَىٰ طَرِيقٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ يَا قَوْمَنَا أَجِيبُوا دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ وَآمِنُوا بِهِ يَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ

وَيُجْرِكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ وَمَنْ لَا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ  
مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءُ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ<sup>34</sup> (٣٠-٣٢)

This is the call these jinn gave to their misled people. First, they introduced this Book to their people that it was revealed after Moses (sws) in confirmation of the predictions found about it in previous scriptures. It may be kept in mind that after Moses (sws), it is only Muḥammad who as a Messenger gave a new *sharī'ah*. Before him, all prophets of the Israelites followed the Mosaic *sharī'ah*. Similarly, the status of the real divine Book before the Qur'ān was occupied by the Torah; other divine scriptures were its supplements. After the Torah, it was the Qur'ān that can be regarded as an independent Book, and the greatest testimony to its divine origin is that it was revealed in confirmation of the predictions already found about it in the Torah and in other divine scriptures.

The section *يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ وَإِلَى طَرِيقٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ* occurs in Sūrah Jinn with slight difference of words thus: *إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ وَلَنْ نُشْرَكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا* (٧٢: ١-٢) (we have heard a Qur'ān wondrous, which shows guidance to the right path and we will not by any means associate any one with our Lord, (72:1-2)). By comparing both these, it is evident that the word *الْحَقِّ* implies the belief of monotheism which is the straight path that leads a person to God. It also refers to the firmly established and firmly grounded nature of this belief as well as it being in accordance with reality and with the norms of sense and human nature. The expression *طَرِيقٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ* (straight path) is referring to the fact that it is easy, leveled out and free from deviations and both these traits necessitate one another. It occurs as an undefined noun to express grandeur and majesty (*tafkhīm*).

After this, the real message is referred to which the jinn delivered to their people: they should respond to the call of this summoner of God and profess faith in him. The imperative words *وَأْمِنُوا بِهِ* (profess faith) allude to the response they should give for the real thing required is professing faith. God will forgive the sins of those who will do so and

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34. They said: "Our people! We have been listening to a scripture revealed after Moses in confirmation of the predictions that exist about it beforehand. This Book guides towards the truth and to a straight path. O People of Ours! Answer the call of God's summoner and profess faith in him! God will forgive your sins and give you refuge from a woeful scourge. And he who does not that pay heed to God's summoner should remember that he is not beyond God's grasp in this earth nor shall there be anyone to help him against God. These are the people who are in open error.

deliver them from a painful doom.

The word *يَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ* is to express part and fraction. It refers to those sins which are not forgiven even after professing faith. In my opinion, they refer to those grave sins which relate to the rights of one's fellow human beings. Compensating the aggrieved party is essential if such sins are to be forgiven. If this compensation and atonement was not done or its opportunity was lost, then it is the requirement of God's justice that the issue be raised between the two parties once again in the court of justice set up on the Day of Judgement. Only God knows what verdict will be passed there; however, this much is evident that if a person does not atone for such sins in spite of having the opportunity, then this is against the requisites of faith. If a person no longer has the opportunity for this atonement, then it can be expected that a person's sincere feeling of remorse, true repentance and those virtuous deeds which a person continues to do in his later life to atone for his sins will intercede for him before God.

Those who have regarded *مِّنْ* to be a surplus word have not given due attention to it. There is not a single surplus word in the Qur'ān. It should also be borne in mind that just as unfounded pessimism about God is not right, similarly unfounded optimism about Him can lead to trials. The balanced attitude in this matter lies between the states of hope and despair.

Though words *وَمَنْ لَا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِهِ أُولِيَاءٌ* can be regarded to be additions from God, but in my opinion in the light of parallel verses of the Qur'ān, these words are from the jinn. In Sūrah Jinn, it is similarly said in their words:

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّنْ نُّعْجِزَ اللَّهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَن نُّعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا (٧٢: ١٢)

And that we have come to know that we cannot escape God's grasp by setting off to some place in this earth or beat him by running away somewhere in the heavens. (72:12)

The part *وَلَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِهِ أُولِيَاءٌ* relates to the Hereafter. In other words, just as they cannot escape God's grasp in this world, in a similar manner, they will have no one to help them against God in the next world.

Here a question arises: Are the jinn also the addressees of the Qur'ān in the same way as humankind and is Muḥammad (sws) a Messenger for them just as he is for humankind? If the answer to this question is in the negative, then what is the meaning of statement given by the jinn: *يَا قَوْمَنَا أَجِيبُوا دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ وَآمِنُوا بِهِ* (O People of Ours! Answer the call of God's summoner and profess faith in him!). If the answer is in the affirmative,



then has the practice of God regarding His messengers explained in detail in the Qur'ān been altered in the case of Muḥammad (sws)? As per this practice, messengers were members of the people they were sent to; they presented their message in their language and spent their lives among their people and launched a tremendous campaign to jolt, shake and awaken each section of their society and conclusively communicate the truth to them; if, even after this effort, their nation did not embrace faith, they declared their acquittal from it and migrated from the land. After this, divine punishment visited these people. Can it be claimed that the Prophet (sws) was able to discharge these obligations among the jinn, just as he was able to do so in the case of human beings? Obviously, this claim cannot be made. Moreover, the life of a messenger is the best example for his followers. Can the life of a human be a complete example for the jinn even though it is self-evident that for human beings, the life of an angel or jinn cannot be an example. Thus while responding to people who would ask why was a human being sent to them and why an angel was not sent, the Qur'ān replied that how can an angel be sent to guide human beings and had an angel been sent, he would have come in the form of a human being.

This also is a fact that when the jinn and humankind have been created from two conflicting substances, it is essential that their temperaments, dispositions and natures be different; similarly, their social and cultural needs as well as the directives and injunctions given be different. What can be regarded common to both are the beliefs of monotheism, the Hereafter and the basic principles of good and evil. Other affairs should nevertheless be different. Thus, if the Qur'ān can guide them, it can only be in matters of beliefs and moral principles. In other affairs of life, they would necessarily require that messengers should come to them from among them who are able to guide them keeping in view their natural wants, needs as well as various issues and circumstances they face so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them.

A little deliberation will show that what I have stated above also emanates from the Qur'ān. The impressions of the jinn referred to earlier on came into the knowledge of the Prophet (sws) through divine revelation and not directly. These precise impressions have been cited in great detail in Sūrah Jinn. There too it has been specified that these impressions of the jinn came to the knowledge of the Prophet (sws) through divine revelation. Thus the *sūrah* begins with the words: قُلْ أَوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا (١:٧٢) (Tell them: "It has been revealed to me that when a group of jinn listened to the Qur'ān, they said

to their people: ‘We have heard a Qur’ān wondrous,’” (72:1)). Had Muḥammad (sws) been a messenger towards the jinn also, he would have directly known these impressions. He should have fulfilled his responsibility of preaching with regard to the jinn the way he fulfilled it with regard to the people of Arabia; however, no such thing is evident from the Qur’ān. There are some narratives which say that a few delegations of the jinn came to visit the Prophet (sws) and he too went to visit some of them on their invitation; however, in the first place, there is such discrepancy in these narratives that they need to be evaluated with respect to their texts as well as chains of narration; in the second place, what at most can be derived from them is that at a few occasions the Prophet (sws) met with some delegations of the jinn or on some occasions he went over to them at their invitation. However, merely this cannot be regarded as enough to fulfill the responsibility of messengerhood towards them.

It is absolutely true that these jinn praised the Qur’ān and called upon their people to profess faith in it. I have indicated earlier that as far as the broader principles of religion are concerned, they are totally common between mankind and jinn; in fact, they are common between mankind and the angels as well; a further claim that can be made in this regard is that even the animal world, the material world and the physical world all adhere to them. For this reason, just as the songs and hymns of the Prophet David (sws) were chanted with him by birds and mountains, in a similar manner, when a party of the righteous jinn heard the Qur’ān, it was overwhelmed with praise for it. So moved were these jinn that they asked their people to profess faith in the Qur’ānic beliefs of monotheism and the Hereafter and to fear His torment. A look at this call given by the jinn earlier in this *sūrah* and also at its details given about it in *Sūrah Jinn* show that the call relates to all those aspects which are common between them and mankind – in fact all the universe. It does become evident from this that the basic message of the Qur’ān is the same for mankind and the jinn; however, it would not be right to say that Muḥammad (sws) is a messenger to the jinn in the same manner he is to mankind. The view of those who make this claim is against the practice of God relating to messengerhood mentioned in detail in the Qur’ān.

Here it is essential to point to a secondary discussion related to this verse.

Since in the previous verses it is only mentioned that believing jinn will be delivered from a painful torment and they are not given glad tidings of entering Paradise in explicit words, it is attributed to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah that he was not of the view that the righteous jinn would

enter Paradise or he at least would be very cautious in saying so in explicit words. I am unable to understand this caution exercised by the Imām. When the evil among the jinn will necessarily go to Hell, why should their righteous be deprived of Paradise? Some later scholars have substantiated this view of the Imām by saying that God does not have any obligation towards anyone. So if in spite of a person's piety and righteousness, He does not admit him into Paradise, then this would not be against justice. In my opinion, this argument is absolutely baseless. No one can impose an obligation on God; however, the rights and obligations He Himself has imposed on Him on the basis of His justice and mercy and has also promised His pious creatures in certain and definite words to fulfill them, why would He deprive the righteous – whether from mankind or the jinn – from them? In my opinion, if anything, the Imām would have said that the righteous jinn will not go to the same Paradise which is reserved for mankind. If this is what he has said, then this has a certain context. I will *inshallāh* discuss this issue in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Jinn.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَمْ يَعْجِ بِخَلْقِهِنَّ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ بَلَىٰ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٣٣)<sup>35</sup>

At the end of the *sūrah*, this verse sounds a warning to the disbelievers. They are asked: “Have they not reflected on the fact that the God Who created the heavens and the earth without any bother is capable of raising the dead to life?” Precisely the same question has been posed by the Qur’ān at other instances before the rejecters of the Day of Judgement. Thus, for example, it was asked: أَفَعَيَّنَا بِالْأَوَّلِ (٥٠: ١٥) (were We not able to create the first time? (50:15)). At other times, the question posed was to the effect: Speak up! Is it more difficult to create the heavens and the earth or to raise the dead back to life?

God then has answered the question Himself in the words: إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ. In other words, God, Who was not unable to create the heavens and the earth not only has the power to resurrect the dead, has the power to do everything. I have indicated at various places in this *tafsīr* that when the Qur’ān’s addressees are so cornered that at times they are unable to answer a question posed, the Qur’ān itself puts forth the answer.

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35. Have they not reflected that the God Who created the heavens and the earth and was not fatigued by their creation also has the power to raise the dead to life? Yes. He has power over all things.

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بِالْحَقِّ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَرَبَّنَا قَالَ فَذُوقُوا  
الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ<sup>36</sup> (٣٤)

The portrayal of the warning sounded in the previous verses continues. They are told to always keep in mind the day when disbelievers will be presented before Hell and will be asked whether the event of the Day of Judgement has proven to be a reality or not. At that time, they will swear by their Lord that indeed it has proven to be a reality. After this confession from them, they will be told to taste torment in retribution of their disbelief. It should be kept in mind that the arguments which substantiate the Hereafter are so evident in the world within man and the one outside him that no sensible person can deny them. All those who have denied the Hereafter have not denied it because they have a legitimate reason for it; they have denied it merely because they were not prepared to sacrifice their base desires! Obviously, people who in merely following their whims and desires have denied their own intellect, their nature and then all prophets and messengers do not deserve to be treated leniently.

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ  
لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ بَلَاغٌ فَبَلِّغْ لَهُم مَّا يَكُونُ لَهُمْ لَعْنَةً وَالْعَظِيمُ<sup>37</sup> (٣٥)

Here, at the end, the Prophet (sws) is asked to show patience and perseverance. He is told that just as steadfast messengers before him braved all adversities with resolve and determination, and strongly adhered to their stance about the truth, in a similar manner, he too should strongly cling to his stance in spite of all the conspiracies worked up and harms inflicted by his enemies. In my opinion, the word *مِنَ الرُّسُلِ* is not to indicate part (*tab‘īd*); it indicates the whole and is for delineation (*bayān*). All prophets of God faced trials one greater than the other and all of them without exception succeeded one hundred percent in these trials.

The words *وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ* imply that if these people are trying to irk the

36. And keep in mind the Day when the disbelievers are brought before Hell. They shall be asked: “Is this not real?” They will reply: “Yes, by our Lord! This is real.” It shall be said to them: “Then taste the torment as a punishment of your disbelief.”

37. Thus persevere the way other steadfast messengers persevered and do not seek to hurry for them. The day they behold what they are being threatened with they will feel as if they did not stay more than an hour of day. Thus it is to communicate! Ultimately, death is surely for those who are the disobedient.

Prophet (sws) by asking him to hasten the punishment, then he should not get worried because of this haste demanded by them. As soon as they see the punishment before them, the respite which they have today will seem was only of a day or an hour of stay in this world.

The word بَلَاغٌ in قَهْلٌ يُهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقُونَ is the enunciative (*khavar*) of a suppressed inchoative (*mubtadā'*). In order to direct all attention on the *khavar*, the *mubtadā'* is suppressed here. The implication is that the Prophet's duty is to only deliver his warnings fully so that no one is left with an excuse to deny it. If after this, these people are destroyed, then it is their own responsibility. If these foolish people are asking to hasten the punishment, then let them do so. When it will come, who else but they will be routed by it.

On these lines, we come to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى فَضْلِهِ وَإِحْسَانِهِ (so all gratitude be to God for His blessing and favour).

Lahore,

7<sup>th</sup> April, 1980 AD

20<sup>th</sup> Jamādī al-Awwal 1400 AH

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